2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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593 to that structure, for both act to pull apart the children of different wives of the same husband.

593 611 I shall return to the distinction between full and half-brothers when discussing the Nuer kinship system. We will then see how categories of relationship fall into two broad classes: the 'bulls', the paternal kin and members of the lineage, and those traced in one way or another through women, the *gaatnyiet*, the children of girls. Half-brothers are 'bulls', but full brothers, who form the closest of all relationships except for that of twins,* are not only paternal kin but also maternal kin. A full brother 'is like your mother and your father'.

III

593 Complicated patterns of family relationships arise from the different forms of domestic union I described in the last chapter, and a rather lengthy discussion of them cannot be avoided.

Often there is opposition between the interests of the legal family and the interests of these other bio-domestic groups; that is to say, between the interests of the group united by marriage and descent and the interests of the procreative group united by common residence and life. When a child is a member of both groups it sometimes happens that the privileges he derives from membership of the one clash with his feelings towards the people of the other. The extent to which this opposition affects the lives of the persons concerned depends on conditions which vary in each case. It is impossible in advance to know how any particular person will be affected, and one can only guess how he will act when one knows the characters as well as the status of the people involved. But the normative principles that govern the behaviour of parents and children may be explained. In any particular case their actions will tend to follow the lines here laid down. Only the position of sons is considered. Daughters will not remain with either their genitor or the kinsmen of their pater, but will become members of their husbands' households. Control over their persons is therefore not disputed, and division of their bridewealth is so well defined by custom that it is a matter of minor importance where they are brought up.

●845 * Twins have a peculiar social position, being treated as one person, and are the object of special observances which I have described in detail in the *Uganda Journal* (1936).

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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she may call herself 'a woman who has just given birth to a child' for months afterwards, and try to solicit privileges on that account. 846

Nuer mothers love their babies and try to do all they can in their limited way for them. Whatever the child may lack, it does not lack its mother's love while she is living. But if the mother dies life is a different thing for the child that is left. A new-born baby demands food, and the artificial feeding of babies is an art entirely unknown to the Nuer. What to do with the small piece of humanity is a serious proposition. 854

Rumour says that they may bury the new-born baby with the dead mother, arguing that it will die soon anyhow, but I do not know of any authentic case where the live child has been buried. It is, however, very true that the motherless baby soon follows its mother. Five motherless infants have been brought to the mission at Nasser, as the people know that the art of the artificial feeding of infants is not unknown there. Two of these babies died, while three have lived so far. 847 165

TWINS

Twins are not uncommon, but are usually a cause of distress to their parents, for they are sure that one will die—and it usually does fail to survive. The mother always nurses one child at one breast and the second child at the other breast, and thus divides the supply of food as evenly as she can between them. 845 [353]

When a man is the father of twins, his brother will sacrifice a sheep before he eats with him so that no harm may come to the babies.

The Nuer has a superstition in regard to the burial of new-born twins. Rumour says that they prefer to tie the hands together and hang them up in a tree rather than 766

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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766 bury them in the ground. I have never seen this done, nor have I known a case of new-born twins both dying.

● 895 I have heard in rather an indefinite way of triplets, but know of no authentic case.

One Nuer told me an almost unbelievable tale. I have tried to verify it from time to time, but have not been able to verify the main part of the story.

His story is as follows:—

A woman in a certain village gave birth to six babies at one time. She and her husband were much distressed as to what they should do to feed them. They finally decided that she could nurse two of them, but could devise no plan for feeding the others. So they decided to keep the two largest, healthiest-looking babies, and they took the other four babies, put them in a baby-basket together, and carried them to the forest which was about one and one-half miles away. They hung the basket up in a tree and left the four living babies—uncovered—in it. Then they returned to their village. The two babies they kept are well, strong children now, and are well cared for. My informant declares this to be true.

In my efforts to verify this tale I have found the name of the village, the name of the mother, the fact that they have 'twin' children the age that the two they kept should be, to be true as given by my informant. But I have not been able to verify his statement that she gave birth to six children.

Is the story a fabrication, or is it true and they are afraid to have it known to a white person? It is easy for a Nuer to say 'No' or 'I do not know', regardless of the facts, if he is afraid to give some information, or does not want to. They know that we would not approve of their method of solving their problem, although any one who knows the Nuer and his limited resources could easily realize what a serious problem the birth of six babies would be to them.

owner killed a man of another district, he began a feud and was liable to be killed by the kin of his victim. It seems that fetish owners were treated differently in different areas. Many people possess medicines which protect them from fetishes. 754

Death may be due to one of three causes: *olic kwoth* (a sickness of god), sorcery and the evil eye, or sickness due to fetishes. This last is sudden and may kill a man quickly, whereas a sickness sent by god is usually prolonged.(1) A man believing himself to be ill on account of a fetish summons a fetish owner to discover whose fetish is responsible. When this is known a sacrifice is made to the fetish and its owner is asked to stop it troubling the sick man. 754 753

When a fetish owner dies, his medicines are preserved until his spirit enter into one of his descendants who will then become a fetish owner in his stead. A man may purchase a fetish from another; the medicine is only the habitation of the fetish spirits who exist apart from it. The Nuer believe that a fetish kills someone because its owner dislikes him. 754

The Nuer Ghoul

Many of the Nilotic tribes believe in ghouls who feed on the bodies of those recently dead. This belief is found among the Acholi, Anuak, Shilluk, Lango, Dinka and Nuer. The Nuer ghoul is called the *ruath* and is regarded with horror by the people. The practice of ghoulist activities is to some extent hereditary, for the potentiality is found in certain lineages, but a man may become a *ruath* even if he is not a member of such a lineage. Disinterment of the dead is regarded as his most horrible activity.

A *ruath* may be killed by common consent and, although no blood must be spilt, he may be beaten to death with sticks without fear of revenge. This is the only instance among the Nuer of killing which does not demand compensation or vengeance.

LIFE CYCLE

[redacted]

In childbirth a woman is attended by a female relative who is herself already a mother. The child's incisor teeth are removed at the age of eight years. 844 854 304

The birth of twins constitutes a danger to their family; special decorations are worn by the kinsmen, animals are sacrificed, and ritual prohibitions observed. As do other Nilotic groups, the Nuer believe that the parents are safe if the twins are of opposite sexes, for the boy will want to preserve his father and the girl her mother. In spite of the dangers, however, the Nuer are joyful at the birth of twins if they both live. Throughout life, twins are subject to certain ritual observances; before a twin can get married they must both together go through a fictional 845 582

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *S.N.R.*, 1931, p.74.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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tions are to be understood as modes of God and not as his essence, which is Spirit.

God being above, everything above is associated with him. This is why the heavenly bodies and the movements and actions connected with them are associated with him. This is why also the spirits of the air are regarded as *gaat kwoth*, children of God, in a way other spirits are not, for they, unlike other spirits, dwell in the air and are also thought of as being in the clouds, which are nearest to the sky. This is why also the *tolwic* spirits are so closely associated with God, for he touched them with his fire from heaven and took them to himself. Some birds also are spoken about by Nuer as *gaat kwoth*, especially those which fly high and seem, to us as well as to Nuer, to belong to heaven rather than to earth and therefore to be children of light and symbols of the divine. The feeling that they are in a measure detached from the earth is enhanced in the case of migratory birds[1] by their disappearances and reappearances. I have heard the idea expressed that in their absence from Nuerland they have gone to visit God's country. This is probably no more than poetic fancy, but we can say that the disappearance of these birds strengthens the allegory of God's children which arises from their ability to do what man cannot do, fly towards heaven and God. Twins also, in a very special sense, are *gaat kwoth*. They belong to the above, and Nuer say that they are birds. The Jikul clan and the Gaanwar clan, whose ancestors fell from heaven, are also *ji kwoth*, God's people, for that reason and are thought to have special powers.

Thus anything associated with the sky has virtue which is lacking in earthly things. Nuer pathetically compare man to heavenly things. He is *raw piny*, an earthly person and, according to the general Nuer view, his ghost is also earth-bound. Between God and man, between heaven and earth, there is a great gulf, and we shall find that an appreciation of the symbolism of the polarity of heaven and earth helps us to understand Nuer religious thought and feeling and also sheds light on certain social features of their religion, for example the greater prestige of prophets than of priests.

[1] I am indebted to Miss Ray Huffman and Dr. Mary Smith for the information that, among others, these are the pied crow, the kite, the pelican, the marabou stork, the eagle, the crested crane, the Cape Paradise flycatcher, the wagtail, and the dove-birds.

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Can any conclusions be reached about the nature of the things which are objects of respect? The totemism of any people involves the selection of certain natural objects to the exclusion of others. Nuer totems are certainly an odd assortment: lion, waterbuck, monitor lizard, crocodile, various snakes, tortoise, ostrich, cattle egret, durra-birds, various trees, papyrus, gourd, various fish, bee, red ant, river and stream, cattle with certain markings, monorchids, hide, rafter, and rope; and, if we were to include totemistic objects, parts of beasts and some diseases. Taking them as a whole we may say that there is no marked utilitarian element in their selection. The animals and birds and fish and plants and artifacts which are of most use to Nuer are absent from the list of their totems. The facts of Nuer totemism do not, therefore, support the contention of those who see in totemism chiefly, or even merely, a ritualization of empirical interests.[1] Nor in general are Nuer totems such creatures as might be expected, on account of some striking peculiarities, to attract particular attention. On the contrary, those creatures which have excited the mythopoeic imagination of the Nuer and which figure most prominently in their folk-tales do not figure, or figure rarely and insignificantly, among their totems.

It is too broad a question to ask why animals, birds, reptiles, and trees should have become symbols for Nuer of the relation of Spirit to lineages. Any answer would have to be in very general terms because they have been common religious symbols among many different people at many different times. We may, however, note that most, though not all, Nuer totems are in a general way highly regarded by all Nuer, and not only by those who respect them, on account of religious associations of one kind or another which have nothing to do with totemism as such. Thus all Nuer have friendly feelings towards all birds and do not harm them because they are—some more than others—symbols of Spirit and loved by God, though Nuer may also be influenced in this matter by their belief that twins are birds, so that all twins respect all birds. Ernst Marno noted nearly a century ago that Nuer will not eat birds[2] and Mr. Jackson, speaking of this avoidance, remarks

[1] e.g. B. Malinowski, *Science, Religion and Reality*, 1926, pp. 24 and 43 seq.; A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Fourth Pacific Science Congress*, vol. iii, 1929, pp. 295–309. Emile Durkheim protested against such interpretations (*Sociology and Philosophy*, Eng. trans. by D. Pocock, 1954, p. 86).

[2] Ernst Marno, *Reisen im Gebiete des Blauen und Weissen Nil*, 1874, p. 348.

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776 613 of descent. Other totems were added later. 'The spirits of their sacrifices (to which they sacrifice) entered into the generations of descent (*kath*).' This might happen in various ways, some of which I have described. An animal or plant, or rather Spirit in and through an animal or plant, helps a man in trouble, and so forth. 776 773 The commonest aetiology is twin-birth of a man and a member of a natural species. Twin-birth is so stock an explanation of 845 totemic affiliations among the Nuer that when asked why a certain lineage respect a certain species they often, if they do not know any story accounting for the association, say at once and without reflection that it must be because of a twin-birth of this kind. It is only when it would be totally unreasonable that a Nuer rejects this as a likely explanation. In discussing totemism with some Nuer on one occasion one of them told me that he had heard that there were people who respect fire. When I asked whether this meant that a man and fire had been born together my question was greeted with derision: 'How, now, could a woman carry fire in her womb?'

776 845 Strange though it may seem to us, Nuer claim that twin-births of men and animals have taken place not only in ancient times but also in recent generations. They may take place even today and occasion no surprise. I had not been long in Nuerland when one morning my Nuer servant Nhial came in some excitement to tell me that a woman of his village, where we were staying, had given birth to a hippopotamus and a male child, both dead. It was too late to see what happened, but I was told that the hippopotamus had been placed in a nearby stream and the child, being a twin and therefore in Nuer eyes a sort of bird, had been placed in a tree. In answer to my questions, I was further informed that it was uncertain whether the family would on account of what had happened respect hippopotamuses in future, though had the child lived he and his descendants would certainly have done so. The reason given for this particular twin-birth was that the woman's husband had killed several hippopotamuses and they had revenged themselves on him by stamping their likeness on one of the twins (*ca gat cal e rau*). In this case, therefore, one is in doubt whether what was taken to the stream was regarded as a hippopotamus in the full sense or not, for animals can stamp their likenesses on a human foetus; but at least the incident shows us how the totemic mentality of the Nuer inclined them at once to

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perceive the form of a hippopotamus in what we would have regarded merely as a monstrosity, and it enables us to understand better why, since the past is justified in the present, they do not reject as beyond the bounds of possibility the stories of their ancestors having been born twins to animals.

The story I have related introduces us to another way in which Nuer think that a totem might enter a family and perhaps in certain circumstances become a totem of its descendants, though I have no evidence of a totemic relationship actually being established in this way. The hippopotamuses caused the child to resemble (*cal*) themselves. I was told that similarly a man who has killed several elephants might beget a child with crooked mouth and nose and thick legs. The whole race of sheep is said to have been acted on in this manner by the *koat*-tree, because they make a habit of eating its shoots. When a lamb is born its legs are doubled up like the roots of the tree. Women refrain from eating the *bulyak* or puff-fish, a remarkable creature which when irritated inflates itself like a balloon, because by doing so they might cause their children to be born with abnormally distended bellies. When Nuer see a fish-eagle swoop on to the water and carry away a fish in its claws they sometimes run after it shouting, to cause it to drop its prey, but should a pregnant woman eat a fish dropped by an eagle her child might be born with deformed arms resembling the wings of the eagle or with twisted feet resembling its claws. If parents who respect tortoises pass a tortoise without some gesture of recognition their child may be born with tiny eyes like those of a tortoise. Other examples of a foetus being stamped with the likeness of a totem have been cited earlier in reference to some similar human fault in behaviour towards the totem and this would seem to be regarded as the most usual cause of an abnormality of this kind, though Nuer think that a new totemic relationship might start in the same way. I think, both because in most cases it is in an established totemic relationship that a creature is said to stamp its likeness on a foetus and also because it is more in accordance with Nuer ideas about Spirit and also about animals, that we would certainly be right to say that when Nuer speak of creatures acting in this way they are thinking of Spirit doing so in the guise of the creatures. The very fact of the abnormality is evidence of the action of Spirit. Consequently, should a man on account of such an event in his family respect a

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species of creatures his first act would be to dedicate a beast of his herd to Spirit in the form and of the name of that species. Thus Spirit through its new attachment to whatever the natural species may be becomes in relation to that man and his family a new spirit of the below with its own distinctive material form different from the material forms of other spirits, and with a name derived from the natural species distinguishing it from other spirits with names derived from other species.

There are other ways in which Nuer say that a man may acquire a totemistic relationship to a natural species, though they also say that it is only rarely that the relationship is maintained by his descendants. They have told me that a man may become seized or possessed by a spirit associated with some creature, the seizure or possession being known by sickness and its diagnosis by one or other form of divination, and that he may afterwards respect it. In practice this is only likely to happen when the particular spirit has been the spirit of some forebear of the sick man. He and his relatives may cast their minds back to any such past affiliations when reflecting on what might be the cause of the sickness. People acquire totemistic obligations through affinal and maternal links. A man respects his wife's totems, at any rate to the extent of not eating or otherwise harming them shortly before having congress with her and during her pregnancies; and a woman respects her husband's totems. Nuer generally respect their mother's totems, but not always. A man said to me, in speaking of a totem of his mother's lineage, 'it is not shared by us, she was married into another lineage' (the speaker's own lineage). Nuer have assured me that a wife's totems will not persist in her husband's line of descent. Her sons' sons may respect them, but this is unlikely unless the spirits of the totems cause them sickness, and then they will generally be forgotten. Consequently, totems, other than those which belong to lineages and go with agnatic descent, enter into families for a generation or two and then go out of them again. But they may return. I once had an interesting discussion with some Nuer about a baby with deformed legs. My informants, who were not related to the child, held that the deformation must have resulted from one of his parents, who should have respected the monitor lizard, having killed or eaten this reptile. They made this deduction from the resemblance they saw between the legs of the child and those of the lizard. When I pro-

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776 613 lineages. The *colwic* spirits are also Spirit in a tutelary relationship to the families and lineages to which they belonged in the flesh before they were metamorphosed into spirit. Also, the spirits of the air may have a tutelary relationship to families and lines of descent, and where their attachment is more to an individual prophet he has public functions through which the spirit becomes patron of local and political communities. Totemic spirits may also, though in a rather different manner, have a secondary significance for political groups through the association of dominant lineages with tribal sections. Likewise, though to a lesser extent, nature sprites are Spirit in a tutelary relationship to families; and even fetishes, though of a rather different complexion, are Spirit in a tutelary relationship to individuals, and sometimes to local communities to which these individuals belong. The attachment of all these spiritual figures to social groups is indicated in various ways, most noticeably in ceremonial and in payment of cattle to them at marriages.

776 That these spiritual conceptions lack autonomy and are rightly regarded as social refractions of God is further shown by the fact that *kwoth*, without any distinguishing name, can become associated with any social group or office. Thus, as we have seen, Nuer speak of the *kwoth* of a leopard-skin priest, 'the spirit of the flesh', and they speak also of '*kwoth nuondè*', 'the spirit of his (the priest's) earth' (pp. 291–2). This is no particular *kwoth* but is Spirit seen in relation to priestly powers and functions. Likewise 805] they speak of *kwoth cuekni*, the spirit of twins, to which sacrifices are made at the birth of twins and to which a cow of the bride-wealth of the sisters of twins is dedicated. Here again, this is not thought of by Nuer as some particular spirit which has an existence and name of its own but as God in a special relationship to twins, or rather to the event of a twin-birth. Another example is the 806] way in which they speak of the *kwoth* of an age-set, the tutelary, nameless, spirit which protects the members of the set and avenges wrongs done to men by their age-mates. This cannot be a distinctive spirit in its own right as it were, if only because the sets pass in turn into oblivion and are replaced by others. It is rather God thought *of* in relation to a particular set, just as he is also the separate, while still being the same, guardian spirit of the other sets. He is both the one and the many—one in his nature and many in his diverse social representations.

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meaning of 'his spirit', 'their spirit', and so forth; in other words, where the statement makes it clear that what is being spoken of is Spirit conceived of in relation to particular persons only. We still have to ask, however, in what sense the crocodile is Spirit for these persons.

Since it is difficult to discuss a statement that something which can be observed, crocodile, is something more than what it appears to be when this something more, Spirit, cannot be observed, it is helpful first to consider two examples of Nuer statements that things are something more than they appear to be when both the subject term and the predicate term refer to observable phenomena.

When a cucumber is used as a sacrificial victim Nuer speak of it as an ox. In doing so they are asserting something rather more than that it takes the place of an ox. They do not, of course, say that cucumbers are oxen, and in speaking of a particular cucumber as an ox in a sacrificial situation they are only indicating that it may be thought of as an ox in that particular situation; and they act accordingly by performing the sacrificial rites as closely as possible to what happens when the victim is an ox. The resemblance is conceptual, not perceptual. The 'is' rests on qualitative analogy. And the expression is asymmetrical, a cucumber is an ox, but an ox is not a cucumber.

A rather different example of this way of speaking is the Nuer assertion that twins are one person and that they are birds.[1] When they say 'twins are not two persons, they are one person' they are not saying that they are one individual but that they have a single personality. It is significant that in speaking of the unity of twins they only use the word *ran*, which, like our word 'person', leaves sex, age, and other distinguishing qualities of individuals undefined. They would not say that twins of the same sex were one *dhol*, boy, or one *nyal*, girl, but they do say, whether they are of the same sex or not, that they are one *ran*, person. Their single social personality is something over and above their physical duality, a duality which is evident to the senses and is indicated by the plural form used when speaking of twins and by their treatment in all respects in ordinary social life as two quite distinct individuals. It is only in certain ritual situations, and symbolically,

[1] I have given a more detailed account in 'Customs and Beliefs Relating to Twins among the Nilotic Nuer', *[illegible]nda Journal*, 1936.

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that the unity of twins is expressed, particularly in ceremonies connected with marriage and death, in which the personality undergoes a change. Thus, when the senior of male twins marries, the junior acts with him in the ritual acts he has to perform; female twins ought to be married on the same day; and no mortuary ceremonies are held for twins because, for one reason, one of them cannot be cut off from the living without the other. A woman whose twin brother had died some time before said to Miss Soule, to whom I am indebted for the information, 'Is not his soul still living? I am alive, and we are really children of God.'

There is no mortuary ceremony even when the second twin dies, and I was told that twins do not attend the mortuary ceremonies held for their dead kinsfolk, nor mourn them, because a twin is a *ran nhial*, a person of the sky or of the above. He is also spoken of as *gat kwoth*, a child of God. These dioscuric descriptions of twins are common to many peoples, but the Nuer are peculiar in holding also that they are birds. They say 'a twin is not a person (*ran*), he is a bird (*dit*)', although, as we have just seen, they assert, in another sense, that twins are one person (*ran*). Here they are using the word *ran* in the sense of a human being as distinct from any other creature. The dogma is expressed in various ways. Very often a twin is given the proper name *Dit*, bird, *Gwong*, guineafowl, or *Ngec*, francolin.[1] All Nuer consider it shameful, at any rate for adults, to eat any sort of bird or its eggs, but were a twin to do this it would be much more than shameful. It would be *nueer*, a grave sin, for twins respect (*thek*) birds, because, Nuer say, birds are also twins, and they avoid any sort of contact with them. The equivalence of twins and birds is expressed particularly in connexion with death. When an infant twin dies people say '*ce par*', 'he has flown away', using the word denoting the flight of birds. Infant twins who die, as so often happens, are not buried, as other infants are, but are covered in

[1] That the names, at least all those I have heard, are taken from birds lowest in the scale of Nuer reckoning requires comment, especially in view of the argument I later develop. It may be due to the Nuer habit of speaking of their relation to God—the birth of twins constitutes such a context—by comparing themselves with lowly things. On the other hand, it may be simply in keeping with the logic of the analogy. Twins belong to the class of the above but are below; just as guineafowl and francolin belong to the class of birds, which as a class is in the category of the above, but are almost earthbound.

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a reed basket or winnowing-tray and placed in the fork of a tree, because birds rest in trees. I was told that birds which feed on carrion would not molest the bodies but would look at their dead kinsmen—twins and birds are also said to be kin, though the usage may be regarded as metaphorical—and fly away again. When I asked a Nuer whether adult twins would be buried like other people he replied 'no, of course not, they are birds and their souls go up into the air'. A platform, not used in the normal mode of burial, is erected in the grave and a hide placed over it. The body is laid on this hide and covered with a second hide. Earth is then carefully patted over the upper hide instead of being shovelled in quickly, as in the burial of an ordinary person. I was told that the corpse is covered with earth lest a hyena eat it and afterwards drink at a pool, for men might drink at the same pool and die from contamination (*nuerr*).

It is understandable that Nuer draw an analogy between the multiple hatching of eggs and the dual birth of twins. The analogy is explicit, and, through an extension of it, the flesh of crocodiles and turtles is also forbidden to twins on the ground that these creatures too, like birds, lay eggs. Miss Soule once had a girl twin in her household who refused fish for the same reason—the only case of its kind known to either of us. But the analogy between multiple births in birds and men does not adequately explain why it is with birds that human twins are equated when there are many other creatures which habitually bear several young at the same time and in a manner more closely resembling human parturition. It cannot be just multiple birth which leads Nuer to say that twins are birds, for these other creatures are not respected by twins on that account. The prohibition on eating eggs is clearly secondary, and it is extended to include crocodiles and turtles—and by Miss Soule's girl fish also—not because they lay eggs but because their laying eggs makes them like birds. Moreover, it is difficult to understand why a resemblance of the kind should in any case be made so much of. The multiple hatching of chicks is doubtless a resemblance which greatly strengthens the idea of twins being birds, but it is only part of a more complex analogical representation which requires to be explained in more general terms of Nuer religious thought. A twin, on account of his peculiar manner of conception is, though not Spirit himself, a special creation, and, therefore, manifestation of Spirit; and when he dies his

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soul goes into the air, to which things associated with Spirit belong. He is a *ran nhial*, a person of the above, whereas an ordinary person is a *ran piny*, a person of the below. A bird, though also not in itself Spirit, belongs by nature to the above and is also what Nuer call, using 'person' metaphorically, a *ran nhial*, a person of the above, and being such is therefore also associated with Spirit. It cannot, of course, be determined for certain whether a twin is said to be a person of the above because he is a bird or whether he is said to be a bird because he is a person of the above, but the connexion in thought between twins and birds is certainly not simply derived from the multiple birth similitude but also, and in my view primarily, from both birds and twins being classed by Nuer as *gaat kwoth*, children of God. Birds are children of God on account of their being in the air, and twins belong to the air on account of their being children of God by the manner of their conception and birth.

It seems odd, if not absurd, to a European when he is told that a twin is a bird as though it were an obvious fact, for Nuer are not saying that a twin is like a bird but that he is a bird. There seems to be a complete contradiction in the statement; and it was precisely on statements of this kind recorded by observers of primitive peoples that Lévy-Bruhl based his theory of the prelogical mentality of these peoples, its chief characteristic being, in his view, that it permits such evident contradictions—that a thing can be what it is and at the same time something altogether different. But, in fact, no contradiction is involved in the statement, which, on the contrary, appears quite sensible, and even true, to one who presents the idea to himself in the Nuer language and within their system of religious thought. He does not then take their statements about twins any more literally than they make and understand them themselves. They are not saying that a twin has a beak, feathers, and so forth. Nor in their everyday relations with twins do Nuer speak of them as birds or act towards them as though they were birds. They treat them as what they are, men and women. But in addition to being men and women they are of a twin-birth, and a twin-birth is a special revelation of Spirit; and Nuer express this special character of twins in the 'twins are birds' formula because twins and birds, though for different reasons, are both associated with Spirit and this makes twins, like birds, 'people of the above' and 'children of God', and hence a bird

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a suitable symbol in which to express the special relationship in which a twin stands to God. When, therefore, Nuer say that a twin is a bird they are not speaking of either as it appears in the flesh. They are speaking of the *anima* of the twin, what they call his *tie*, a concept which includes both what we call the personality and the soul; and they are speaking of the association birds have with Spirit through their ability to enter the realm to which Spirit is likened in metaphor and where Nuer think it chiefly is, or may be. The formula does not express a dyadic relationship between twins and birds but a triadic relationship between twins, birds, and God. In respect to God twins and birds have a similar character.

It is because Nuer do not make, or take, the statement that twins are birds in any ordinary sense that they are fully aware that in ritual relating to twins the actions are a kind of miming. This is shown in their treatment of the corpse of a twin, for, according to what they themselves say, what is a bird, the *tie* or *anima*, has gone up into the air and what is left and treated—in the case of adults platform burial being a convenient alternative to disposal in trees—as though it might be a bird is only the *ring*, the flesh. It is shown also in the convention that should one of a pair of twins die, the child who comes after them takes his place, counting as one of them in the various ceremonies twins have to perform and respecting birds as rigorously as if he were himself a twin, which he is not. The ceremonies have to be performed for the benefit of the living twin and their structure and purpose are such that there have to be two persons to perform them, so a brother or sister acts in the place of the dead.

This discussion of what is meant by the statement that a twin is a bird is not so far away from the subject of totemism as it might seem to be, for the stock explanation among the Nuer of a totemic relationship is that the ancestor of a lineage and a member of a natural species were born twins. The relationship of lineage to species is thereby made to derive not only from the closest of all possible relationships but also from a special act of divine revelation; and since the link between a lineage and its totem is the tutelary spirit of the lineage associated with the totem it is appropriate that the relationship should be thought of as having come about by an event which is a direct manifestation of Spirit.

However, an examination of the Nuer dogma that twins are

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birds was made not on account of totemic relationships commonly being explained in terms of twinship but because it was hoped that it would be easier to understand, in the light of any conclusions reached about what is meant by the statement that a twin is a bird, what Nuer mean when they say that some totemic creature, such as the crocodile, is Spirit. Certainly there is here neither the sort of metaphor nor the sort of ellipsis we found in earlier statements. Nor can Nuer be understood to mean that the creature is identical with Spirit, or even with a spirit, Spirit conceived of in a particular totemic refraction. They say quite definitely themselves that it is not; and it is also evident, for Nuer as well as for us, that a material symbol of Spirit cannot, by its very nature, be that which it symbolizes. Nevertheless, though crocodile and Spirit are quite different and unconnected ideas, when the crocodile is for a certain lineage a symbol of their special relationship to God, then in the context of that relationship symbol and what it symbolizes are fused. As in the case of the 'twins are birds' formula, the relation is a triadic one, between a lineage and a natural species and God.

There are obvious and significant differences between the creature-Spirit expression and the cucumber-ox and bird-twin expressions. Cucumber, ox, man, and bird are all things which can be known by the senses; but where Spirit is experienced other than in thought it is only in its effects or through material representations of it. We can, therefore, easily see how Nuer regard it as being in, or behind, the crocodile. The subject and predicate terms of the statement that something is Spirit are here no longer held apart by two sets of visible properties. Consequently, while Nuer say that totemic spirits and totems are not the same they sometimes not only speak of, but act towards, a totem as if the spirit were in it. Thus they give some meat of a sacrifice to the lion-spirit to lions, and when they sacrifice to the durra-bird-spirit they address also the birds themselves and tell them that the victim is for them. Nevertheless, they make it clear in talking about their totems that what respect they show for them is on account of their representing the spirits associated with them and not for their own sake.

Another difference is that whereas in the cases of the cucumber-ox and twin-bird expressions the equivalence rests on analogies which are quite obvious even to us once they are pointed out—